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MADRIGALS AND CHRONICLES

MADRIGALS & CHRONICLES

Being newly found Poems written
by JOHN CLARE

Edited with a Preface and Commentary
by EDMUND BLUNDEN



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PREFACE.

IN the spring of 1920 the Editor, in partnership of enthusiasm and research with MR. ALAN PORTER, made the first investigation on a broad plan of the numerous Manuscript Works by JOHN CLARE which are housed by the PETERBOROUGH MUSEUM. The enterprise was liberally rewarded. A great number of Poems, so long hidden from the Public, came into the hands of the Collaborators, who lost no time in preparing a new selection of CLARE's work, making their choice as well from what was now first revealed as from what had already been printed. *John Clare: Poems Chiefly From Manuscript*, published by MR. R. COBDEN-SANDERSON in the autumn of the same year, met with the most cordial reception both from Readers and Reviewers, and seems to have had no small effect upon the general estimate of CLARE among the British Poets, "the love poet of Nature"—to have attracted to him a part of that honour which mischance and incuriosity had held at distance from him since his early years.

The quality of CLARE's poetry is such as to deserve, and as will presently receive, the perpetuation of a collected issue. The multitude of his Poems, and the unascertained location of certain groups of them, make such an Edition dependent upon editorial labour for some years to come; nor is the present the most advantageous moment for

dealing with the mechanical problems of so extensive a Book. Since the publication of the 1920 Volume, however, the unpublished work of CLARE known to me has been importantly increased ; and the Poet's warm admirers will, I am confident, in the period which must elapse before a comprehensive and essentially complete edition of CLARE can be added to the Library, welcome this "upsewing" of examples of the later discoveries. They are arranged with an eye to the reader's best pleasure, and also, in their several sections, follow the probable order of date.

The circumstances of their ingathering must be mentioned. I paid a second visit to the PETERBOROUGH MUSEUM, and for a second time surveyed the miscellany of Note-Books great and small, loose Papers and Scribblings of CLARE's owned by that Institution. These in the short Catalogue printed by the MUSEUM to commemorate CLARE's Centenary in 1893 amounted to over a hundred Items or Parcels, and in the interim others, uncatalogued, had been acquired ; small wonder, then, that the first harvest of ours in 1920 had left plenty of encouragement for the Gleaner. Soon afterwards another important source was opened. The Librarian at NORTHAMPTON, MR. REGINALD W. BROWN, with great kindness informed me of a Collection which he had lately purchased on behalf of his Committee, and, his invitation being seconded by my Friend MR. EDWARD LIVEING, Editor of *Discovery*, who saw some of the CLARE Documents, I was able to explore the Papers available at the time. MR. BROWN has since arranged a "CLARE CORNER" at NORTHAMPTON, assembling the Books, Manuscripts, Bust and Portraits of the Poet in pleasant neighbourliness.

Several other courteous Correspondents have given me the opportunity to transcribe Verses by CLARE ; but it is



H. Cooper, Northampton, photographer

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JOHN CLARE, 1828

from the above-named investigations, and the stated Master-Collections, that I derive the several Poems printed herein. Two Pieces, however, *Sunrise in Summer* and *The Ragwort*, were among those discovered in 1920; they were then excluded from the published Volume, in a word, by the throw of the coin; and after reading them over again many times, I am convinced that I cannot lose this new opportunity of making them known.

The Life of JOHN CLARE was depicted, with as much accuracy and fresh detail as was then possible, in the 1920 Volume; since which, as the Poetical Works have been largely supplemented, so numerous new Biographical facts have been brought from the corners into which they had strayed. The full Biography is to come. For the Reader's convenience, (and in reading certain of CLARE's Poems, the impression is deepened by a recollection of his Life's Epitome), a short notice is required here.

The spectacle of JOHN CLARE's rise into fame is as astonishing as its sequel is sad. His father, PARKER CLARE, day-labourer at HELPSTONE, near PETERBOROUGH, and his mother ANN, were poor people, but shrewd and thoughtful. He was born on July 13th, 1793, a seven-months' child, whose twin sister died almost at once, and it was by a hard struggle that he was sent to School, there to become proficient in the exercises which it was hoped might give him "a chance in life." He contrived to buy an occasional Book, an Isaac Walton, a Thomson, and discovered at the evocation of such Classics a spirit of Poetry in himself. This overmastered him to such an extent that in his early manhood he was dismissed from a lime-kiln, where he had worked, for neglect of Duty—to wit, distributing a printed Prospectus of *Poems by John Clare* during his employer's

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photographer Emery Walker Ltd. Collo.

JOHN CLARE, ABOUT 1844

time. Indeed, his poetical ambition seriously impeded his chances of obtaining work with the thick-skulled tradesmen and petty tyrants of the District; and, having served in the compulsory Militia already, he almost took up soldiering as the last refuge of a Rhymester. "I went to STAMFORD twice to enlist in the Artillery which was recruiting there, but my variety of mind prevented me, besides my love matters."

A glance at these love matters, which were of lifelong significance to him.—The first Sweetheart of JOHN CLARE was MARY JOYCE; a gulf grew between the two at last, but MARY haunted him throughout his long days, and became to him a mystic sweet inspiration, omnipresent yet absent for ever. As they drifted apart, CLARE found himself moved by other love. In 1817 he met "PATTY," MARTHA TURNER, destined to be his wife; who retained to her death in 1871 the striking dark hair, dark eyes and radiant colouring which lured him to WALKERAY LODGE in the spring of their lives.

Poetry at length left poverty behind for a space. CLARE'S name and talents came to the notice of JOHN TAYLOR, the publisher of Keats and Lamb; and TAYLOR made a choice of CLARE'S Poems, which appeared as *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* on January 16, 1820. The Book captured the Town at first sight. The PRINCE REGENT sent the Author a letter of congratulation; many Noblemen and other subscribers contributed to a Fund which, invested in Navy Stocks, and supported by separate Annuities from the MARQUIS OF EXETER and the EARL SPENCER, assured CLARE an income approaching £45. He made his first visit to London, feeling "that I was not the same JOHN CLARE, but that some stranger soul had



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JOHN CLARE, ABOUT 1844

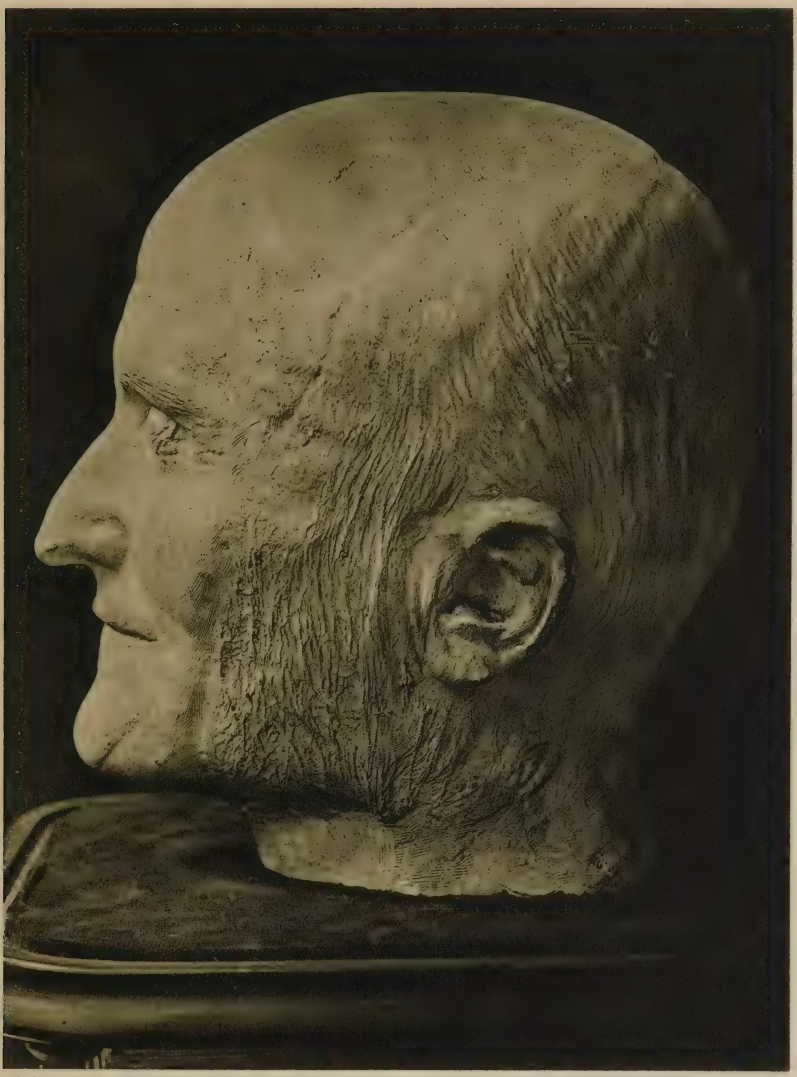
jumped into my skin" ; found VESTRIS singing a song of his, and met the gilded and the glorious.

Then he returned to HELPSTONE, and field labour, and marriage with "PATTY." "I went to work as usual, but was often tormented, and sent for home to satisfy the gaze of strangers." His first Book, trumpeted in every journal, reached its Fourth Edition. *The Village Minstrel*, a better Book, followed in 1821, and presently appeared in the Second Edition. His third Publication, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, showing a maturing poetic method, full of the warm bloom of his friend DE WINT's Paintings, was delayed until 1827 ; no reprint was called for. *The Rural Muse*, last of his contemporary Books, and one of the richest and most melodious Collections ever published by an English Poet, found no better fortune. CHRISTOPHER NORTH championed it in *Blackwood's*, but fashion had long since discarded CLARE, and the faithful worshippers of Poetry are never thousands strong.

While this decline was going on, CLARE's luck in other matters turned against him. A growing family made ever weightier burdens for him, against which his income, despite his over-work with pen and plough, was not enough. The want of companionship at home depressed him, contrasted with the company of LAMB, HOOD, CARY, DE WINT and other choice spirits in town, among whom his good sense and nobility of presence ("PRINCELY CLARE," LAMB called him) made him a constant favourite. Even "PATTY" had little sympathy with his genius. He became solitary and stubborn, and his mind was troubled. The change of home which LORD MILTON arranged for him in 1832, though only to the adjoining Parish of NORTHBOROUGH, instead of awakening him from his dangerous introspection and retro-

spection, threw him into deeper shadows. He begged his Friend TAYLOR, with whom (in spite of passing differences) he had maintained his first unity, to get him to Town, that DR. DARLING, who had attended KEATS, might advise him. TAYLOR could not see the urgency, and soon afterwards CLARE, who had been speaking to an invisible MARY JOYCE, and running into water to cool his fever, was taken from his home to an Asylum. His mind was flashing with ideas not shared by his neighbours as they fed their pigs and sold their apples. "So Man's insanity," says MELVILLE, "is Heaven's sense; and wandering from all mortal reason, Man comes at last to that celestial thought, which, to reason, is absurd and frantic; and weal or woe, feels then uncompromised, indifferent as his God."

The Asylum to which CLARE was sent in July, 1837, was at HIGHBEACH, EPPING FOREST, and the alienist, none other than that MATTHEW ALLEN whom TENNYSON so blusteringly denounces—over the wood-carving speculation that failed—in *Sea Dreams*. ALLEN, nevertheless, was a friend to CLARE, who, he continually declared, would recover. "His mind," he wrote, "did not appear so much lost and deranged as suspended in its movements by the oppressive and permanent state of anxiety, and fear, and vexation, . . . his extreme poverty and over-exertion of body and mind: and no wonder that his feeble bodily frame, with his wonderful native powers of mind, was overcome." Healthily and quietly governed by ALLEN, CLARE certainly made good progress. On May 8, 1841, the Doctor whom Tennyson, as from the Judgment Seat, enrolled among the goats, advertised in the *Athenæum* that his recovery "would soon be complete, if his anxiety for the welfare of his Family could be relieved by the consciousness that he had an



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DEATH MASK OF JOHN CLARE, 1864

income more adequate to their support," and several Banks and Bookselling Houses were prepared to receive subscriptions. Whatever good might have come of this was frustrated by JOHN CLARE himself, who, seized with an irresistible longing for Home, "returned out of ESSEX, and found no MARY." His tramp began on July 20, ended on July 23. The following New Year's Day dawned on CLARE in the COUNTY ASYLUM, NORTHAMPTON.

There he lived, in a sort of local fame, until May 20, 1864. He wrote poems in profusion, which have for the most part disappeared from view, save some which were transcribed by various undiscriminating enthusiasts. At times he gave no hint of aberration ; at others he startled his hearers with his delusions and outbursts of rage. Visitors, some of rank and talent, called on him—such as MISS AGNES STRICKLAND, to whom he made some rather terrifying remarks. As he grew very old, his head, conspicuous in its aspect of perpetual thought, bowed over his weakened body ; his love for flowers and sunshine seemed gone ; and after many times being heard to say " I want to go home " and " I have lived too long," JOHN CLARE died in unconsciousness late on a bright afternoon.

The characteristics of CLARE's Poetry are, an unparalleled intimacy with the English Countryside ; a rare power of transfusing himself into the life of everything beneath the sky, save certain ardours and purposes of men ; a natural ease of diction, well suited to hold the mirror up to Nature ; a sense of the God in the Fly and the Cataract ; a haunting —MARY JOYCE the Symbol—of an Ethereal Love, Woman *in excelsis* ; and, as the charm for his casual hearer, a delicate and elemental music.

Apart from his aloofness from many themes, there are

defects in his Poetry which may easily be over-emphasized. His conception of an eternal singing leaves many of his individual Poems insufficiently wrought up. One must regret that no critical mind of strong instinct was ordinarily accessible to him, to school him into a closer walk with form, to require of him the final touches. For myself, I do not dismiss a Poem of obvious emotional and imaginative value, because of some rebellious rhyme or momentary flaw ; and in the perplexing task of selecting from a great number the Pieces now first published I have sometimes preferred the one with the imperfections to its rivals of better shapeliness but slighter immanent impulse.

EDMUND BLUNDEN.

NOTE.

THE EDITOR's thanks are due to MR. J. W. BODGER, F.L.S., the untiring Chief of the PETERBOROUGH MUSEUM, and to MR. REGINALD W. BROWN, F.L.A., Librarian at NORTHAMPTON, for generous leave to transcribe and use the following poems, the originals of which are in their charge. MR. BROWN also gave facilities for the copying of the various Portraits which now appear in a book for the first time.

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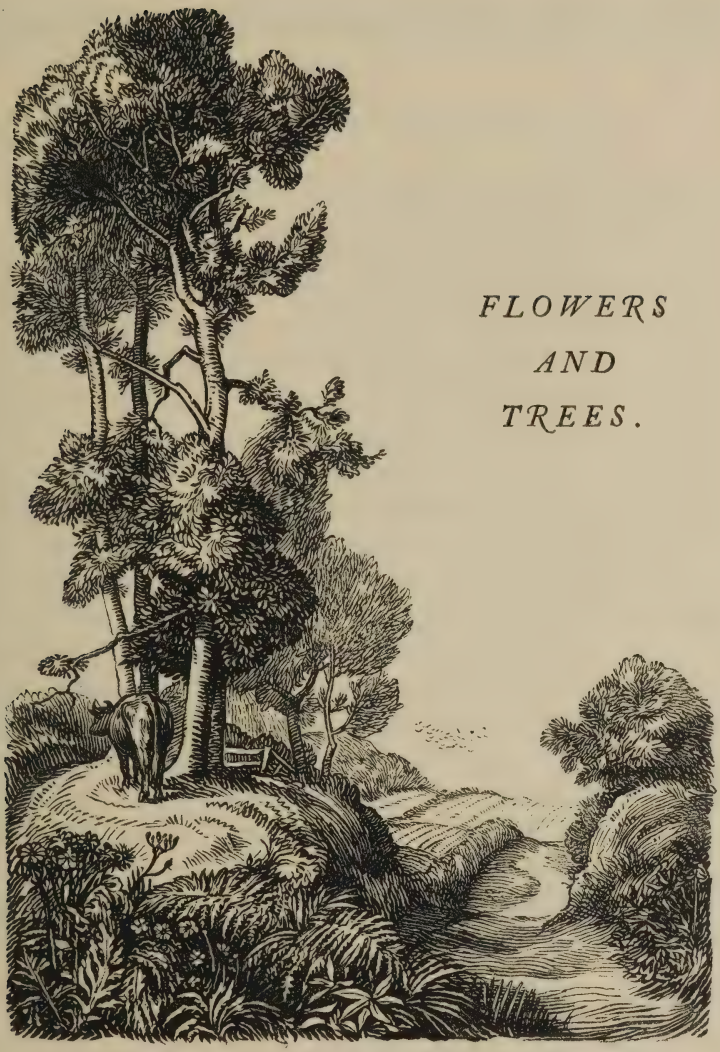
JOHN CLARE, ABOUT 1844. x

Oil Painting by F. GRIMSHAW. NORTHAMPTON PUBLIC LIBRARY.

JOHN CLARE, 1864. xii

Cast of his Head after Death, probably taken by DR. EDWIN WING, Medical Superintendent at NORTHAMPTON ASYLUM during CLARE'S last years. DR. WING intended to have written a special Study of CLARE'S Mind, when he too died in the Summer of 1864. NORTHAMPTON PUBLIC LIBRARY.

MADRIGALS & CHRONICLES



FLOWERS AND TREES.

The DESTROYER.

IN suns and showers luxuriant May came forth
And spread her riches as of nothing worth,
Cowslips and daisies, buttercups and crowds
Without a name as if they dropt from clouds,
On green and close and meadow everywhere,
So thick, the green did almost disappear
To gold and silver hues, and blooms did vie
With the rich grass luxuriant mastery.
The simple shepherd in his early hour
With almost every footstep crushed a flower.
The winds did all they could, though oft in vain,
To nurse and form them on their stalks again,
Yet some were crushed so much they could not rise,
Finding in poet's heart a room for sighs.
And those his dog beat down did hardly mind
But formed again as happy as the wind,
Leaving a lesson read with every day
That harm falls most in man's destroying way :
And who could think in such a lovely time
And such a spot, where quiet seemed in prime,
As ne'er to be disturbed, that strife and fear
Like crouching tigers had howled havoc here ?

OBSCURITY.

OLD tree, oblivion doth thy life condemn,
Blank and recordless as that summer wind
That fanned the first few leaves on thy young stem
When thou wert one year's shoot: and who can find
Their homes of rest or paths of wandering now?
So seems thy history to a thinking mind,
As now I gaze upon thy sheltering bough.
Thou grew unnoticed up, to flourish now
And leave thy past as nothing all behind:
Where many years and doubtless centuries lie.
That ewe beneath thy shadow, nay, that fly
Just settled on a leaf, can know with time
Almost as much of thy blank past as I—
Thus blank oblivion reigns as earth's sublime.

The PRIMROSE BANK.

'TIS spring ; day roams with flowers
Down every little lane,
And the night is hardly night
But a round of happy hours.

Yes, night is happy night,
The sky is full of stars,
Like worlds in peace they lie
Enjoying one delight.

The dew is on the thorn,
And the primrose underneath
Just agen the mossy root
Is smiling to the morn,

With its little brimming eye
And its yellow rims so pale
And its crimp and curdled leaf—
Who can pass its beauties by

Without a look of love
When we tread the little path
That skirts the woodland ride ?
Who can pass, nor look above

To Him who blesses earth
With these messengers of spring
And decorates the fields
For our happiness and mirth ?

I cannot ; for I go
In my fancy once again
In the woods and little holts
Where the primrose used to grow.

The woodbank seemed so fair,
And the hedgerow in the lane
Seemed so sweet that scores of times
Have I wished my cottage there,

And felt that lovely mood
As a birthright God had given
To muse in the green wood
And meet the smiles of heaven.

And though no culture comes
To the places where they grow
Every spring finds more and more
Till the wood's all yellow blooms.

The woodman's guessing way
Oft tramples many down,
But there's not a blossom missing
When he comes another day.

The woods have happy guests,
And the birds sing twice as loud
When they meet such crowds of blossoms
Underneath their little nests.

As beauties for the spring
Their Maker sends them forth
That man may have his mirth
And Nature laugh and sing.

For when roaming where they flower
They seemed to make woods happy
And amid the green light round them
I've spent many a happy hour.

But since I used to stray
In their hazel haunts for joy
The world has found the happy spots,
And took the charm away.

It has tracked the pleasant springs
Like armies on their march,
Till dearest spots that used to be
Are nought but common things ;

Save that their sights employ,
Balm gales and sunny blooms,
The mind in shaping heavens
As one continued joy.

The RAGWORT.

RAGWORT, thou humble flower with tattered leaves,
I love to see thee come and litter gold,
What time the summer binds her russet sheaves ;
Decking rude spots in beauties manifold,
That without thee were dreary to behold,
Sunburnt and bare—the meadow bank, the baulk
That leads a waggon way through mellow fields,
Rich with the tints that harvest's plenty yields,
Browns of all hues ; and everywhere I walk
Thy waste of shining blossoms richly shields
The sunburnt sward, in splendid hues, that burn
So bright and glaring that the very light
Of the rich sunshine doth to paleness turn,
And seems but very shadows in thy sight.

LANGLEY BUSH.

ONE summer's day in happiest mood
I sat beside old Langley Bush,
And o'er the furze in Langhoods Wood
I listened at the singing thrush ;
Nought did my idle mind engross,
The tiny flixweed's only flower
Was there, and little beds of moss
Swelled pleaching to the sunny hour.

I passed it in a sicker day.
The golden furze-blooms burnt the wind
With sultry sweets—and there I lay
Tormented with the saddest mind ;
The little hill did naked lie,
The old old bush was broke and gone,
My heart had felt it glad to die
To miss life's sorrows coming on.

I looked upon its naked stump,
And pictured back the fallen tree
To days I played hop, skip and jump
As happy as a boy could be.
I turned me to that happy day
I streaked beneath its mossy bough,

And there came shadows of dismay,
So dismally, I feel it now.

I thought o'er all life's sweetest things
Made dreary as a broken charm,
Wood-ridings where the thrush still sings
And love went leaning on my arm.
I thought, and felt as desolate
As want upon a winter scene,
While by that broken stump I sat,
The type of broken hopes within.

The EARLY DAISY.

WITH all the pleasant things
That come with spring,
What time the mavis builds and sings,
I love the daisy well ;
Ere hedges throw a sprout
Of greenness out
They peep and shine about
And care not where they dwell.

Beside the garden pales
Their silver bloom prevails
And glads the children's tales
While sitting there at play ;
In the grass they come and crowd,
Wherever weed's allowed
A footing, they are proud
In glad spring's early day.

Sallows that by the little pond recline
And sweetly shine
In tasselled gold seem not so sweet as thine
Low blooming at their foot !
I've thought so when a boy
In play's employ,

Racing the lambs in joy
And resting at its root.

The blackthorns like a sheet
And faintly sweet
Pale March in hedges meet
Like snows in bloom,
But daisies came before
On green and moor
And ere snow storms were o'er
I saw them come.

The mind will dream and cling
To pleasant things
That come again with spring,
As when health used to go
Down little paths and spy
Cowslips so nigh
That, as we wandered by,
'Would pat agen the shoe.

VIOLET and DAISY.

THE little violets blue and white,
Refreshed with dews of sable night,
Come shining in the morning light
In thorn-enclosed grounds ;
And, whether winds be cold or chill,
When their rich smells delight instil,
The young lamb blaas beside the hill
And young spring happy sounds

But roads are mire and hedges brown
When daisies greet me up and down,
Some with a red spot on the crown
Spread open to the sky,
That often frowns, and yet will smile,
And with spring's hopes its love beguile—
O may I shape my life the while
With such an humble eye.

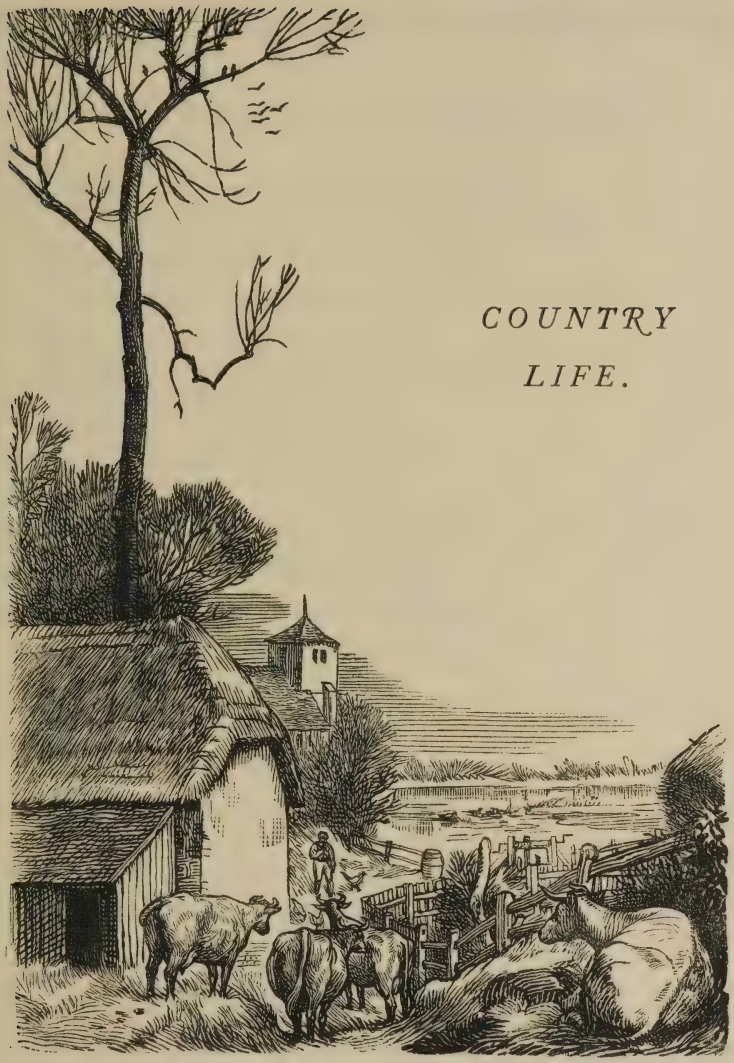
FLOWERS.

THE flowers are silent in their bloom,
Without a sorrow or a tomb,
Enjoying hours to all so dear,
The summer months of every year.

Winds are their suitors and they play
Music all the summer day,
Round their beauty and their breath
That never hears the voice of death.

They are the pearls of earth and air
And meet with friendships everywhere,
The Scripture truths of every soil,
Field flowers that never spin or toil.

The flower is silent in its bloom,
Without a sorrow or a tomb,
Enjoying sunshine, winds and showers,—
Silent is the life of flowers.



COUNTRY LIFE.

COUNTRY SWEETHEARTS.

"I'LL ne'er walk at even grim
When the night is glimpt wi' grey ;
When the light is waxing dim ;
Deeds are done at closing day.
Ever sin' by blossom'd bean
While the gnats were dancing by,
Ye did on my bosom lean,
Aye the tear's bin in my eye.

"Ever sin' ye pass'd the morn
When ye little dreamt a spy,
Meeting Dolly 'hind the thorn,
Aye the tear's bin in my eye
Ever sin' ye vow'd to wed,
And I prov'd wi' heavy sigh
Ye'd the vow to many made,
Aye the tear's bin in my eye."

"Sweet the tear shines on thee, love,
Which I soon will wash away ;
Tenderness has won me, love,
Fear thou not the even grey.

Sin' we sat by beans in bloom,
I have bin the ring to buy ;
Think no harm from that shall come,
Wipe the tear from either eye."

SUNRISE in SUMMER.

THE summer's morning sun creeps up the blue
O'er the flat meadows' most remotest view:
A bit at first peeps from the splendid ball,
Then more, and more, until we see it all.
And then so ruddy and so cool it lies,
The gazer views it with unwatering eyes,
And cattle opposite its kindly shine
Seem something feeding in a land divine:
Ruddy at first, yet ere a minute's told
Its burning red keeps glowing into gold,
And o'er the fenny level richly flows,
Till seeded dock in shade a giant grows;
Then blazing bright with undefinèd day
He turns the morning's earnest gaze away.

MAY.

ALL nature breathes of joy and hails the May,
The very flowers nod dances to the wind,
The fluttering birds about the bushes play
That shine like sheets of snow with flowers belined.
The schoolhouse door in wandering fancy's way,
The boy repeats his play-games in his mind,
And builds anew his huts of stone and clay,
That freedom left when school hours called away,
By some barn wall or low cot's sunny side.
Among the pasture molehills madly play
The wool-wrapt-leggèd lambs, and in gay pride
The wild foal gallops with excess of joy,
And happy moos the calf in colours pied,
Ignorant of cares that human peace destroy.

AUTUMN.

SUMMER is gone and all the merry noise
Of busy harvest in its labouring glee;
The shouts of toil, the laughs of gleaning boys
Sweeing at dinner hours on willow tree,
The cracking whip, the scraps of homely song,
Sung by the boys that drive the loaded wain,
The noise of geese that haste and hiss along
For corn that litters in the narrow lane
Torn from the waggon by the hedgerow trees,
Tinkles of whetting scythes amid the grain,
The bark of dogs stretched at their panting ease,
Watching the stook where morning's dinner lay—
All these have passed, and silence at her ease
Dreams autumn's melancholy life away.

AUTUMN LANDSCAPE.

THE woods' tanned greenness beautifully burns
To russets, reds and yellows; where the eye
Revels in wild delight, and loathly turns
To where the fields and meadows lonely lie,
Bleached in one brown and melancholy stain.
There larks together flock, and lowly fly,
Among the stubs, for summer-littered grain,
All silent, save for noises that complain
Of fears while the pined hawk darts whizzing by.
Odd cows and horses browze about the lane
Where banks and dykes undainty meals supply;
While the boy pauses by the meadow lakes
To hear the crow repeat its lonely cry
Pleased with the floods the frequent tempest makes.

SCHOOLBOYS in WINTER.

THE schoolboys still their morning rambles take
To neighbouring village school with playing speed,
Loitering with pastime's leisure till they quake,
Oft looking up the wild-geese droves to heed,
Watching the letters which their journeys make ;
Or plucking haws on which the fieldfares feed,
And hips, and sloes ; and on each shallow lake
Making glib slides, where they like shadows go
Till some fresh pastimes in their minds awake.
Then off they start anew and hasty blow
Their numbed and clumpsing fingers till they glow ;
Then races with their shadows wildly run
That stride huge giants o'er the shining snow
In the pale splendour of the winter sun.

The FODDERING BOY.

THE foddering boy along the crumping snows
With straw-band-belted legs and folded arm
Hastens, and on the blast that keenly blows
Oft turns for breath, and beats his fingers warm,
And shakes the lodging snows from off his clothes,
Buttoning his doublet closer from the storm
And slouching his brown beaver o'er his nose—
Then faces it agen, and seeks the stack
Within its circling fence where hungry lows
Expecting cattle, making many a track
About the snow, impatient for the sound
When in huge forkfulls trailing at his back
He litters the sweet hay about the ground
And brawls to call the staring cattle round.

MORNING.

THE morning now right earlily in dew
Bathed her sweet naked limbs of fairest hue,
While like a veil all careless thrown aback
On her white shoulders hung her hair so black ;
And when the sun a minute earlier rose
The lovely morning sought her cloudy clothes,
But finding none she hasting shrank away ;
For night abashed had startled into day.
The sun reigned absolute in cloudless sky
And wooed morn's timid beauty to comply,
And scarlet as the dress she earlier wore
Her white face turned that was so fair before ;
While fear in every limb diffused its charms
As soft she sighed and melted in his arms.

A FIRESIDE SKETCH.

WHERE does comfort's bosom glow,
Where lives he a tenant now ?
In snug places out of doors,
Fields, or woods, or rushy moors ?
No, for winter occupies
Every bit of earth and skies ;
Overhead the clouds are dull,
Underfoot the roads are full
Of mire and sludge, and water too,
That slushes in the ploughman's shoe,
And spatters from the hasty horse,
That has the meadow's floods to cross.
So where is comfort ? can it be,
Underneath the woodland lee,
Where the shepherd still about
Found primrose buds ere March was out,
And maidens in the summer lay
On their elbows in the hay ?
And labour's self, that could not bear
To wear his lazy jacket there,
Complains as much as any one
And puts another garment on ;
And still, do all he ever may,
He cannot keep the cold away.

He buttons up as on he goes,
His hat he slouches o'er his nose,
And, glad to keep the storm behind,
He turns his back upon the wind,
And knocks his hands, and stamps his toes,
And in his pockets as he goes
Will hide them—yet do what he may,
He can't get out of winter's way.

No, 'tis not there : the trees around
Have thrown their shelter on the ground.
The sheep lie quaking underneath,
And cows seem almost starved to death,
That rest awhile, then up again,
Then streak and try to bite in vain ;
But grass is short on hill and swamp,
They bite ten times before they champ,
Till storms come on with wild affray.
Then turning heads another way
They hurkle underneath the bushes
Knee-deep among the whistling rushes,
And let them hurkle where they will
They're in the way of winter still.

So where is comfort ? does he roam,
Or, what is likelier, keep at home ?
Where smoke its sooty flight ascends
And green logs frizzle at both ends

With sap until it blazes high—
Till summer seems as sitting by :
When industry in haste to go
Will just one moment hold a toe,
And toil, whose clothes are on the drop,
That has but little time to stop,
Half warms his fingers where he may
And knocks them as he goes away
To make them and to keep them warm
While doing jobs about the farm.

Where is comfort ? maybe, here ;
Sitting in the elbow chair,
With a pipe beneath his nose,
While the smoke at leisure goes
Up agen the mantle-tree
In a wreath of silver-grey ;
With a jug of gingered ale,
Or little book that owns a tale
For merry-making, not too long,
And what is better, shorter song—
While in the chimney-top the snow
Falls right upon the fire below
With just a little quench, and then
It seems to burn as bright agen.
And when that's gone, they look for more,
A heap of roots is at the door :

And now a song, and now a tale,
And now and then a jug of ale !
The gloomiest day and roughest weather,
Care's foot falls lighter than a feather
And joy holds both his sides together
Before he laughs, and all's akin
To comfort, who is host within ;
Who lays another billet on,
Begins good cheer ; and when it's gone,
The world and he are wholly quits,
The king of hearty mirth he sits.
The news so full of greedy wars,
Of struggling honours, stubborn scars,
No sooner in his presence lies
But wonder bustles with surprise,
Leaving content with heart at ease,
And noisy war as quiet peace.

With not one argument to spend
In contradicting foe or friend,
Or one worth while to waste with care,
Ease occupies his cushioned chair.
The whirl it causes is but whim,
He's nought with it, or it with him.
All things in common he receives,
Nor doubts in earnest, nor believes :
He hears the weekly paper read,
Then lifts his hand above his head

His pipe to reach, his thoughts to ease,
And smokes earth's troubles into peace,
That sheds its fragrance all about,
Until he knocks the ashes out :
Then o'er his knees he pants to stoop,
And garters his loose stockings up,
And seeks his stick, and leaves his room
To take a walk till dinner's come.
Here comfort like the miser's pelf
Is self all occupied with self.
Heedless of either praise or blame,
The same in all and just the same,
Whose mind amusement never lacks,
Content with last year's almanacks,
Paper and print are books with him
And difference but another's whim.
A mind so easily supplied
Makes as it thinks of all beside.

And gossip, who with industry
Could never long agree to be,
Although her tongue more toil commands
Than he can do with both his hands,
She leaves the news from door to door
And every morning looks for more—
In vain she taps the arm of ease
And tells the likeliest tale to please ;

He scarcely turns his head awry
And *humph* and *ha*'s his whole reply.
She waiting keeps the empty chair,
And cannot sit, but stands to hear
The news looked o'er—and all the rest,
Too long to listen to, is guessed;
Then bids good-day, a grace for news,
And busy idleness pursues,
As satisfied with fools' deceit
As honest people are with meat.
Her whisper worries mischief on,
Then waits until the noise is gone
And in the tempest will contrive
To be the harmless't thing alive,
Playing bo-peep behind the screen
At all the world, and still unseen.

A grape on thistles never grows,
And peace with gossip never goes;
O comfort, be it mine to live
Far from the cure she has to give;
A blameless and a quiet life,
As comfort's partner all my life;
And as to trouble, pain or care,
Let them not have a sigh to spare
But comfort, let me live with him,
Right sound at heart and stout of limb!
Then, comfort, edge thy chair away,
I'll be thy votary, if I may.

WINTER.

'TIS winter weather, up and down
The schoolboy slurs again,
The deepest pond in all the town
Would bear a loaded wain.

The little birds half pined agen,
Though dogs may blink and growl,
Will come where Goody feeds the hen
Half tame as are the fowl.

And signs of harder weather still
Are noticed every day,
The wild geese droves in noises shrill
Go floating far away ;

And cawdemawdies flit agen
In colour like the snow,
They swop away from dreary fen
And heed not where they go.

On, on they go, and seldom stop,
A warmer spot to find,
And up the meadow floods they swop
Like snowballs in the wind.

'Tis winter here and everywhere ;
In vain the robins sing,
The eve comes in still more severe
And nothing tokens spring.

Cats curl their tails and watch no more
The stackyard's squeaking mouse,
But waiting for the open door
They hurry in the house.

The i'cles on the eaves and that
To sticks of silver run,
And break upon the ploughman's hat
When melted by the sun.

They shorten till the day is done
And lengthen every morn,
When drops like diamonds in the sun
Hang knobs on every thorn.

Yet comfort still the heart surrounds,
No matter how severe
The weather is, when home abounds
With comfort all the year.

Where pleasant easy hearts can find,
And pleasant books together,
A shelter from the cold and wind,
A fig for dreary weather !

WOODCROFT CASTLE.

WOODCROFT, thy castle many a story yields—
How drunken rebels scorning flood and fen
Turned up their horses in thy blooming fields
And killed bold Hutchinson and all his men;
They show the dangerous height from which he fell—
The narrow moat the naked wall surrounds;
The staring towers in naked quiet dwell,
And sheep and oxen fill the lonely grounds.
The sailing puddock makes a lonesome cry,
And strangers tell the tale while passing by:
How rebels entered, and the master fell,
And morts of riches buried in the well!
The labourer wonders where the riches lay,
Digs on and thinks of money all the day.

HARVEST RHYME.

THE harvest morn, a busy man!
There's nought can do without him;
Has scarce a minute in his hands
To rest and look about him.
The wheat is shining in the stowk,
The barley's flung together,
The beans begin to black and drowk
And merry is the weather.

The mist is early forced to run,
The sun it burns him early,
And the dykes they reek before the sun
Has dried the bearded barley:
So by the hedge the shockers sat
In the day's grey mellow dawning
And with the snuff-box seasoned chat
In the harvest's early morning.

The morning, like the grazing horse
Up, out, and stirring early,
Their giant shadows stalk across
Some three or four lands of barley;

The boy with shouldered fork and rake
Laughs loud and halloos early—
"What a soldier would my shadow make
As he marches by the barley!"

The milkmaid singing like a boy
With her yokes upon her shoulder
Has in her face such health and joy,
All love her that behold her.
The partridge where she nimbles past
Whews up with sudden warning
And the hare bolts from his bunch of grass,
So early in the morning,

But the lark sits on the barley swath
As she passes to the pasture
And though the mouse runs o'er her path
He meets with no disaster;
With not a thought to hurt or harm,
All ways of mischief scorning,
She sings along the busy farm
The joy of every morning.

Through the hedge the horseboy rustles past
Where the horses blundered through;
O'er head and shoulders pattering fast
He shakes down showers of dew.

His dirty slop as dabbled shows
As in a shower of rain
But careless as a song he goes
And cracks them from the grain.

The STONE.

THE traveller journeying on the road alone
Sees by the highway side an ancient stone
And finds it pleasant in the weary day
To sit him down and wear an hour away.
The strongest hand of mischief needed more,
And failed to move, or break, or turn it o'er.
The man of ninety knew it when a boy,
The only thing that nothing could destroy,
And just the same as then it now appears,
The fragment maybe of some hundred years.
Beside the stone the wild flower gathers high,
No grazing horse can bite or trample nigh,
And smaller birds contented and alone
Can sit and shelter by the ancient stone.

A HILL-SIDE HOUSE.

THERE is a house stands in a lonely way,
The hill seems falling on it all the day ;
It seems half-hidden, like a robber's den,
And seems more safe for robbers than for men.
The trees, look, bushes scarcely half as big,
Seem taking root and growing on the rig.
The cows that travel up with little heed
Seem looking down upon the roof to feed,
And if they take a step or stumble more
They seem in danger then of tumbling o'er.
The cocks and hens that fill a little space
Are all that look like home about the place.
The woods seem ready on the house to drop,
And rabbits breed above the chimney-top.

NOVEMBER.

THE shepherds almost wonder where they dwell,
And the old dog for his right journey stares:
The path leads somewhere, but they cannot tell,
And neighbour meets with neighbour unawares.
The maiden passes close beside her cow,
And wanders on, and thinks her far away;
The ploughman goes unseen behind his plough
And seems to lose his horses half the day.
The lazy mist creeps on in journey slow;
The maidens shout and wonder where they go;
So dull and dark are the November days.
The lazy mist high up the evening curled,
And now the morn quite hides in smoke and haze,
The place we occupy seems all the world.

GIPSIES.

THE gipsies seek wide sheltering woods again,
With droves of horses flock to mark their lane,
And trample on dead leaves, and hear the sound,
And look and see the black clouds gather round,
And set their camps, and free from muck and mire,
And gather stolen sticks to make the fire.
The roasted hedgehog, bitter though as gall,
Is eaten up and relished by them all.
They know the woods and every fox's den
And get their living far away from men ;
The shooters ask them where to find the game,
The rabbits know them and are almost tame.
The aged women tawny with the smoke
Go with the winds and crack the rotted oak.

PLEASANT SOUNDS.

THE rustling of leaves under the feet in woods and under hedges ;

The crumping of cat-ice and snow down woodrides, narrow lanes and every street causeway ;

Rustling through a wood or rather rushing, while the wind halloos in the oak-top like thunder ;

The rustle of birds' wings startled from their nests or flying unseen into the bushes ;

The whizzing of larger birds overhead in a wood, such as crows, puddocks, buzzards ;

The trample of robins and woodlarks on the brown leaves, and the patter of squirrels on the green moss ;

The fall of an acorn on the ground, the pattering of nuts on the hazel branches as they fall from ripeness ;

The flirt of the ground-lark's wing from the stubbles—how sweet such pictures on dewy mornings, when the dew flashes from its brown feathers !

EVENING.

HOW beautiful the eve comes in,
The grazing kine, the village din
Of happy children, cocks and hens,
And chickens chirping in their pens,
And hogs that grunt the roots to eat,
And dogs asleep on their forefeet,
And sparrows on the mossy thatch
Waiting whatever they may catch—
Beneath the oak, the old cart shed,
There the capon goes to bed,
On the old crippled waggon, see,
Propped up with an axle tree.
By the wall on broken rail
Tweets red-breasted firetail,
And there neighbour pied flycatch
Builds cobweb nest in the old thatch,
Where besom weed that high wind leaves
Blossoms and blooms above the eaves.
The old cow crib is mossed and green
As if it just had painted been,
The ramping kecks in orchard gaps
Shake like green neighbours in white caps,

On which the snail will climb and dwell
For three weeks in its painted shell.
There the white-nosed clock-a-clay
Red and black-spotted sits all day,
Round which the white-nosed bee will hum,
To which the black-nosed bee will come
More than a hundred times a day,
Till evening shadows cool in grey.
Wormwood, burdock the cart conceals,
Rotting and wanting both the wheels,
The battered waggon wanting three
Stands propped with broken axle tree—
A henpen with two slats away
And hen and chickens gone astray,
A barrow left without a wheel
Since spring, which nettles now conceal
From three stone-getting on the moor.
The creeping donkeys pass the door,
The geese on dunghills clean their quills
And squabble o'er the dainty pills
Thrown out by the housewife's cares,
Who supper for her man prepares.
Labour returning from its toils—
Ditcher that the earth besoils,
Hedgers from the wattled thorn,
Scaring birdboy with his horn,
Who blows it to the wandering moon
And thinks the village knows the tune,

The shepherd in the nearly dark,
Followed by his dog's gruff bark,
The milkmaid tripping through the dew,
Singing all the evening through—
The owlet through the barn-hole peeps
And all the village hides and sleeps.

The CAMP.

WILL you come to the Camp in the pale moonlight,
Where stars are the watchmen each sweet summer's night?
Will you come to the Camp when the stars shine bright
In the pale moonlight?

Will you come to the Camp ere the moon goes down,
Where the song shall be sung o'er the ale so brown?
Will you come to the Camp not a mile from the town
Ere the moon goes down?

The joys of the Camp are not cares of the Crown,
There'll be fiddling and dancing a mile from the town—
Will you come to the Camp ere the moon goes down
A mile from the town?

The camp of the Gipsies is sweet by moonlight,
In the furze and the hawthorn and all out of sight—
There'll be fiddling and dancing and singing to-night,
In the pale moonlight.

SONG.

SHE tied up her few things,
And laced up her shoe-strings,
And put on her bonnet worn through at the crown;
Her apron tied tighter,
Than snow her cap whiter,
She lapt up her earnings and left our old town.

The dog barked again
All the length of his chain,
And licked her hand kindly, and huffed her good-bye;
Old hens prated loudly,
The cock strutted proudly,
And the horse at the gate turned to let her go by.

The threshing man, stopping
The old barn-floor whopping,
Wished o'er the door-cloth her luck and no harm;
Bees hummed round the thistle,
Where the red robins whistle,
And she just had one look on the old mossy farm.

'Twas Michaelmas season,
They'd got corn and peas in,
And all the fields cleared save some rakings and tithes;

Cote-pigeons muster
Round the beans' shelling cluster,
And done are the whettings of reap-hooks and scythes.

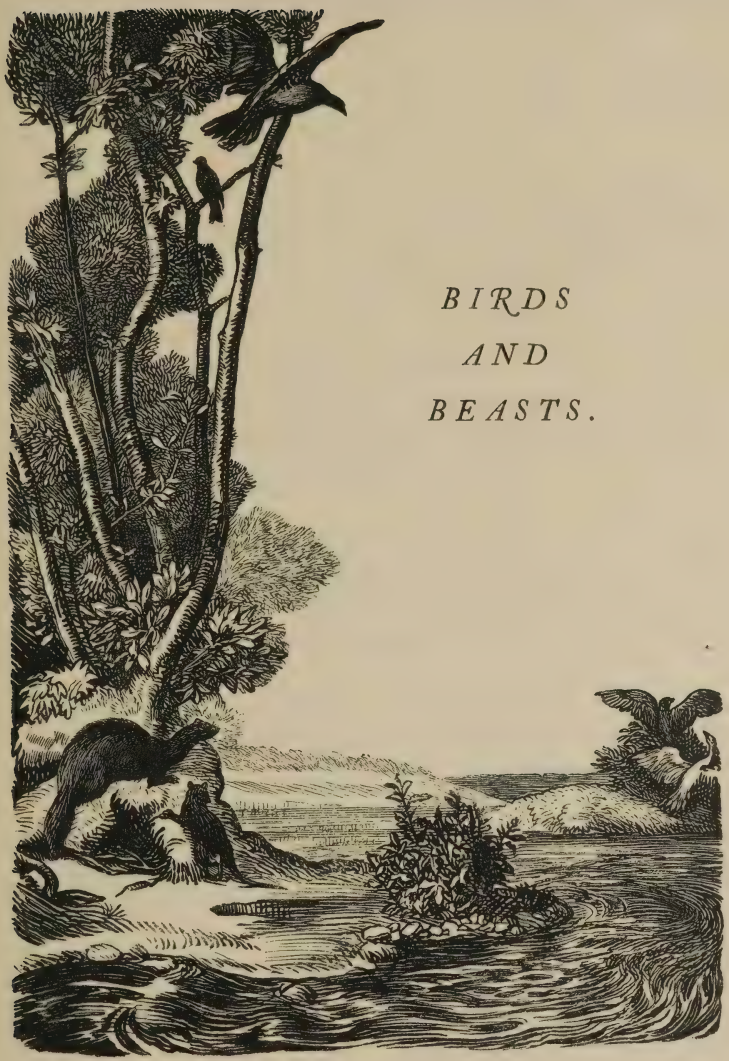
Next year's flowers a-springing
Will miss Jenny's singing :
She opened her Bible and turned a leaf down.
In her bosom's forewarnings
She lapt up her earnings
And ere the sun set will be in her own town.

MARY HELEN.

THE flaggy wheat is in the ear
At the low end of the town,
And the barley horns begin to spear
The spindle through the crown ;
The black snail he has crept abroad
In danger's ways to run,
And midges o'er the road
Are dancing in the sun ;
When firdeals darkest shadows leave,
Sweet Mary Helen walks at eve.

In the deep dyke grows the reed,
The bulrush wabbles deeper still,
And oval leaves of waterweed
The dangerous deeper places fill ;
The river winds and feels no ill.
How lovely sinks the setting sun ;
The fish leaps up ; with trembling trill
Grasshoppers chirrup on the reed ;
The mead so green, the air so still,
Evening assembles sweet indeed
With Mary Helen from the hill,
Who wanders by that river's brim,
In dewy flowers and shadows dim.

Right merrily the midges dance
Above the river stream,
Their wings like silver atoms glance
In evening's golden beam;
The boat-track by the river side,
Where Mary Helen roves,
The cloud sky where the river's wide,
The banks of willow groves,
And Mary Helen in young pride
Rambling by the river side.



BIRDS AND BEASTS.

The SKYLARK LEAVING HER NEST.

RIGHT happy bird, so full of mirth,
Mounting and mounting still more high
To meet morn's sunshine in the sky
Ere yet it smiles on earth,

How often I delight to stand,
Listening a minute's length away,
Where summer spreads her green array
By wheat or barley land;

To see thee with a sudden start
The green and placid herbage leave
And in mid air a vision weave
For joy's delighted heart,

Shedding to heaven a vagrant mirth
When silence husheth other theme
And woods in their dark splendour dream
Like heaviness on earth.

My mind enjoys the happy sight
To watch thee to the clear blue sky,
And when I downward turn my eye
Earth glows with lonely light.

Then nearer come thy happy sounds
And downward drops thy little wing,
And now the valleys hear thee sing
And all the dewy grounds

Gleam into joy ! now from the eye
Thou'rt dropping sudden as a stone,
And now thou'rt in the wheat alone,
And still the circle of the sky.

And absent, like a pleasure gone,
Though many come within the way,
Thy little song to peeping day
Is still remembered on.

For who that crosses fields of corn
When skylarks start to meet the day
But feels more pleasure on his way
Upon a summer's morn ?

'Tis one of those heart-cheering sights
In green earth's rural chronicles
That upon every memory dwells
Among home-fed delights.

BIRDS' LAMENT.

O, says the linnet, if I sing,
My love forsook me in the spring,
And never more will I be seen
Without my satin gown of green.

O, says the pretty-feathered jay,
Now my love is fled away
For the memory of my dear
A feather of each sort I'll wear.

O, says the sparrow, my love is gone,
She so much that I doted on
And e'er since for that selfsame thing
I've made a vow I ne'er will sing.

O, says the water-wag-my-tail,
I courted a fair one but could not prevail,
I could not with my love prevail,
So that is the reason I wag my tail.

O, says the pretty speckled thrush,
That changes its note from bush to bush,
My love has left me here alone
And I fear she never will return.

O, says the rook, and eke the crow,
The reason why in black we go—
Because our love has us forsook,
So pity us, poor crow and rook.

O, says the owl, my love has gone,
It was her I doted on ;
Since she has gone I know not where to follow,
But after her I'll whoop and hollo.

ON A JOURNEY: FRAGMENT.

THE coy hedge-sparrow flaps her wing
And hops about the hedges,
And soon to brood the early spring
Will have some downy pledges ;
They'll lift their heads and caw and crow
Hid by the dyke's bulrushes,
Almost before the winter haw
Has left the leafing bushes.

The blackbird's wing was draggling wet
With the shower so sudden coming
As on the whitethorn bush he sat
Where the wild white rose was blooming ;
The young ones in a nest of love,
Where the hedge the bramble hopples,
Cree'd, cawed and stretched their necks above
With their down all hung with dropples.

The jay set up his copple crown
And screamed to see a stranger
And swopt and hurried up and down
To warn the birds of danger ;

And magpies where the spinney was
  Noised five and six together
While patiently the woodman's ass
  Stood stretching round his tether.

AUTUMN BIRDS.

THE wild duck startles like a sudden thought,
And heron slow as if it might be caught;
The flopping crows on weary wing go by,
And greybeard jackdaws, noising as they fly;
The crowds of starnels whizz and hurry by
And darken like a cloud the evening sky.
The larks like thunder rise and suther round,
Then drop and nestle in the stubble ground;
The wild swan hurries high and noises loud,
With white necks peering to the evening cloud.
The weary rooks to distant woods are gone,
With length of tail the magpie winnows on
To neighbouring tree, and leaves the distant crow,
While small birds nestle in the hedge below.

The CROW.

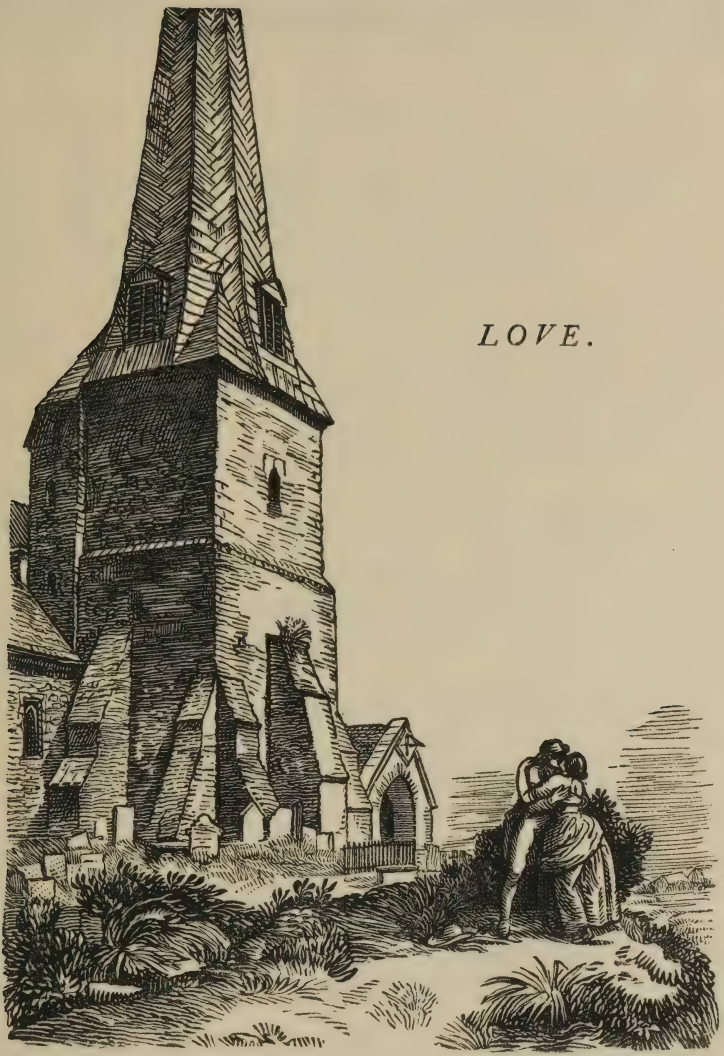
HOW peaceable it seems for lonely men
To see a crow fly in the thin blue sky,
Over the woods and fields, o'er level fen.
It speaks of villages or cottage nigh
Behind the neighbouring woods, when March winds high
Tear off the branches of the huge old oak ;
I love to see these chimney-sweeps sail by
And hear them o'er the gnarlëd forest croak,
Then sosh askew from the hid woodmen's stroke,
That in the woods their daily labours ply.
I love the sooty crow, nor would provoke
Its March-day exercise of croaking joy :
I love to see it sailing to and fro
While fields and woods and waters spread below.

MARTEN.

THE marten cat, long shagged, of courage good,
Of weazel shape, a dweller in the wood,
With badger hair, long shagged, and darting eyes,
And lower than the common cat in size,
Small head, and ever running on the stoop,
Snuffing the ground, and hindparts shouldered up,—
He keeps one track and hides in lonely shade
Where print of human foot is never made,
Save when the woods are cut: the beaten track
The woodman's dog will snuff, cock-tailed and black,
Red-legged, and spotted over either eye:
Snuffs, barks, and scrats the lice, and passes by.
The great brown hornëd owl looks down below,
And sees the shaggy marten come and go.

The marten hurries through the woodland gaps
And poachers shoot and make his skin for caps.
When any woodmen come and pass the place,
He looks at dogs and scarcely mends his pace.
And gipsies often and bird-nesting boys
Look in the hole and hear a hissing noise.
They climb the tree—such noise they never heard,
And think the great owl is a foreign bird;

When the grey owl her young ones cloaks in down,
Seizes the boldest boy and drives him down.
They try agen and pelt to start the fray.
The grey owl comes and drives them all away,
And leaves the marten twisting round his den
Left free from boys and dogs and noisy men.



LOVE.

BALLAD.

FAIR maiden, when my love began,
Ere thou thy beauty knew,
I fearless owned my passion then
Nor met reproof from you.

But, now perfection wakes thy charms
And strangers turn to praise,
Thy pride my faint-grown heart alarms
And I scarce dare to gaze.

Those lips to which mine own did grow
In love's glad infancy,
With ruby ripeness now doth glow
As gems too rich for me.

The full-blown rose thy cheek doth wear,
Those lilies on thy brow,
Forget whose kiss their buds did bear
And bloom above me now.

Those eyes, whose first sweet timid light
Did my young hopes inspire,
Like mid-day suns in splendour bright
Now burn me with their fire.

Nor can I weep what I bemoan,
As great as are my fears ;
Too burning is my passion grown
To e'er be quenched with tears.

To * * * * *

MY love, thou'rt like yon morning bed
The hills above
In yonder east we see ;
Thy breasts so white, thy cheeks so red,
O sweet the morning wakes in thee,
My witching love.

My love, thou'rt like the summer's day
That wakes the dove
And smiles so sweet we see ;
Thy looks so smiling, dress so gay,
O sweet the summer shines in thee,
My witching love.

My love, thou'rt like the evening scene,
As sweet to prove,
O passing sweet to me ;
So meek, so gentle in thy mien,
O sweet the evening meets in thee,
My witching love.

The HEART THAT'S SMIT.

THE heart that's smit with the white and red
That rosy cheeks do entertain,
And on a bosom's lily bed
Longs for to lie and be well again,
The wounded that doth pains endure
From star-like eyes and snowy skin
Is stung by toys that admit no cure
If there's no heart within.

In vain they love, in vain may glow
At beauty that is all display,
Love without roots can never grow
But like cropt flowers decay.
The scentless flower that in show exceeds
But pleases for an hour,
Then's tost aside like children's weeds—
And such is beauty's power.

The heart's the soil where love doth grow,
Its virtue doth all charms excel,
Their union is true bliss below,
Love must be where they dwell.

The finest jewels so rich and rare
  Are always cased in a meaner skin,
Nor would the casket be locked with care
  But for the gem within.

A LIVING PICTURE.

HER hair was swarthy brown and soft of hue,
As the sweet gloom that falls with even's dew,
That on her fine white forehead did divide
In the triumphant negligence of pride.
Her eyes were dark, but they wore lights to shine
That love adores and poets call divine,
And her cheeks' summer blooms wore hues the while
Of love's soft innocence without its guile ;
And on the poutings of her amorous lip,
Where love delicious nectar longed to sip,
Beauty sat throned, in that bewitching spell
That love adores, and language cannot tell ;
Whose charms triumphant made each gazer pay
Heart-aches for looking, ere he turned away.

The SECRET.

I loved thee, though I told thee not,
Right earlily and long,
Thou wert my joy in every spot,
My theme in every song.

And when I saw a stranger face
Where beauty held the claim,
I gave it like a secret grace
The being of thy name.

And all the charms of face or voice
Which I in others see
Are but the recollected choice
Of what I felt for thee.

The GREENWOOD SIDE.

THE stray path rambles through the furze
That gives the balmy smells of June,
The glad wind all the bushes stirs,
Brown linnet chitters o'er a tune :
Then, maiden, walk and hear the lay,
And be a friend with joy to-day.

The wild heath spreads a table green,
Health, hope and joy are at the feast,
Then on my arm in pleasure lean
And journey here a welcome guest :
Then come away and let us find
Joys that for years will please the mind.

What is there half so sweet and dear
As sweet discourse from lips we love
In earth's green spots and places where
Joys breathe a blessing from above,
And, free from care's disquiet ways,
Find things to profit and to praise ?

Come, throw domestic cares aside,
Home toils may wait another day ;
Delay waits by the greenwood side
And stoops for blossoms by the way,

Where arm in arm and side by side
We'll dally o'er the heath so wide.

Here's flowers of almost every kind,
  Blue little bells scarce reach your foot,
Shake so enticing to the wind
  They'll make ye stoop to get the root ;
And there's the ling to tempt your stay,
To get a load and take away.

Briars crossing paths I'll trample down,
  And burr-balls which we wander through,
I'll stoop to pluck them from thy gown
  And feel it honour so to do;
Love has so many things to say,
Come with the instant nor delay.

Hasten and leave delay behind,
  The sun has half his journey gone ;
Haste bending to the summer wind
  While one hand holds thy bonnet on.
E'en now thy vision fills my eye
And beauty's garment flutters by.

"STILL UNCHANGEABLE."

LOVE can melt the stony-hearted,
Love's a tie that can't be parted,
Though so often crossed and thwarted.

Love from coldest hopes can borrow
Joys that shall be bright to-morrow,
Though it often meets with sorrow.

Love in every limb is blooming
In that witching angel woman,
Though age's storm is slowly coming.

Joy tripping light as any feather
Leads on in love's divinest weather,
And one seat holds them all together.

Cheek to cheek is pressed so tender,
Love should from all ills defend her
In every walk, and never wander.

But how many have their meetings,
Smiling lips, and happy greetings,
Tender looks and bosom-beatings,

That shall part! and time concealing
Tries to conquer every feeling;
But memory will her sighs be stealing.

There are faces thought the dearest,
There are hearts once linked the nearest,
That oft meet with lot severest.

That met in love's divinest weather
And ere their choice could part would rather
Die : and yet not come together !

'Tis more than love for this and t'other,
Dearer than sister feels for brother,
And earth but seldom owns another.

And though the mind is crossed and thwarted
And love's first thraldom cut and parted,
It seems the dearest where it started.

MARY.

IT is the evening hour,
How silent all doth lie :
The horned Moon she shews her face
In the river with the sky.
Prest by the path on which we pass
The flaggy lake lies still as glass.

Spirit of her I love,
Whispering to me
Stores of sweet visions as I rove,
Here stop, and crop with me
Sweet flowers that in the still hour grew—
We'll take them home, nor shake off the bright dew.

Mary, or sweet spirit of thee,
As the bright sun shines to-morrow
Thy dark eyes these flowers shall see,
Gathered by me in sorrow,
In the still hour when my mind was free
To walk alone—yet wish I walked with thee.

To HARRIETT.

THE tresses of thy glossy hair,
As dark as is the raven's wing,
When flying in the sunny air
Beneath the marble clouds of spring !
'Tis dark, nay black as starless night,—
Or glossy beauty's softest light.

The thunder tempest near the sun
Wears awful darkness on its breast ;
Thy glossy hair, as black, has none
But softest hues where love could rest.
Thy neck and face were snowy fair—
But beauty was her coal-black hair.

Like darkness in a sunny sky
It lay upon her neck in light,
As black clouds over sunbeams lie,
Till her white skin seemed doubly white ;
While the rich light in those black eyes
Outshone the sun in summer skies.

LOVE.

LOVE is a secret
Like a bird in a shell,
Like a rose ere it blossom
All unseen will it dwell.

'Tis the kernel of fruits,
The germ of all flowers,
The blaze of the diamond,
The moment of hours.

'Tis the star in night's darkness,
The sky in the river,
The soul in the bosom
That wears it for ever.

'Tis a word and the dearest
Each language has shewn,
'Tis a thought the sincerest
Any tongue has made known.

O WERT THOU in the STORM.

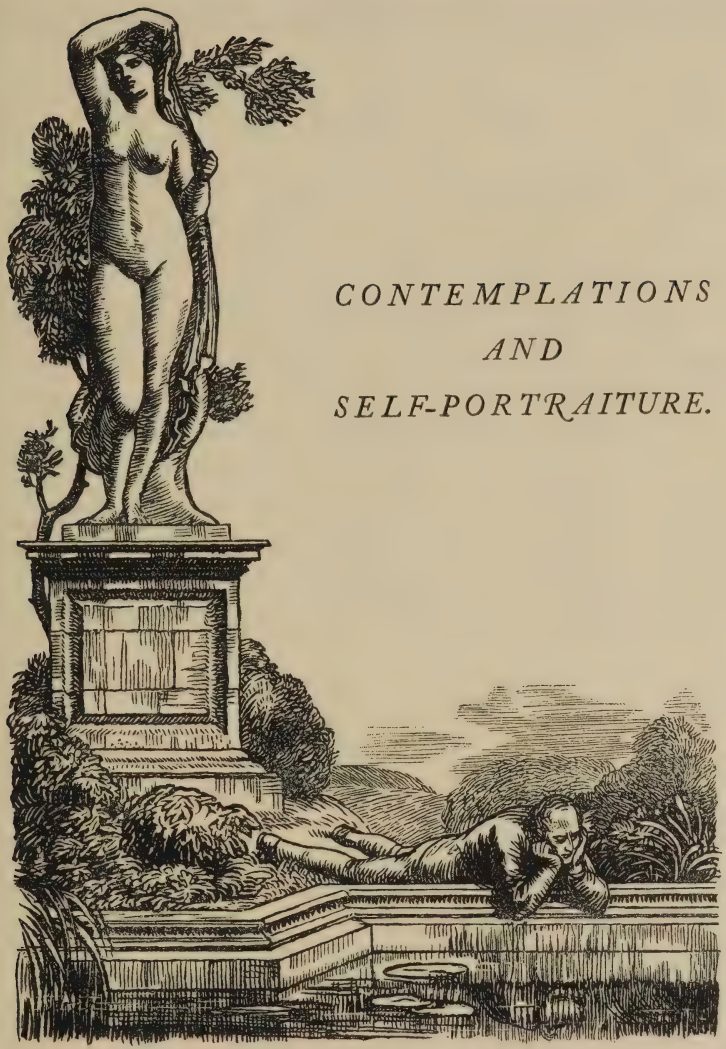
O wert thou in the storm,
  How I would shield thee!
To keep thee dry and warm
  A camp I would build thee.

Though the clouds poured again,
  Not a drop should harm thee;
The music of wind and rain
  Rather should charm thee.

O wert thou in the storm,
  A shed I would build for thee,
To keep thee dry and warm.
  How I would shield thee!

The rain should not wet thee
  Nor thunderclap harm thee;
By thy side I would set me
  To comfort and warm thee.

I would sit by thy side, love,
  While the dread storm was over,
And the wings of an angel
  My charmer would cover.



CONTEMPLATIONS AND SELF-PORTRAITURE.

To HEALTH.

MILD health, I seek thee ; whither ? Art thou found
'Mid daisies sleeping in the morning dew,
Along the meadow paths where all around
May smells so lovely ? Thither would I go.
Where art thou, envious blessing ? now the cold
Is gone away, and hedge and wood is seen
All lovely, and the gay marsh marigold
Edges the meadow lakes so freshly green,
My straining eye is anxious to behold
Thee up and journeying on the swallow's wing,
To see thee up and shining everywhere
Among the sweet companions of the spring.

On SEEING A BEAUTIFUL STATUE.

THOU lovely shade of heavenly birth,—
Aught else thou canst not be,
The copy of the loves on earth
Were never types of thee ;
Where is the face can looks impart
So heavenly-born as thine ?
Rude nature tamed with studied art
Owns nothing so divine.

Thou type of beauty's reigning flower,
To form thee thus was given
A soul that spurned at earthly power
And grasped the fire of heaven.
Of faded Greece the goddess still,
Formed from eternity,
'Twere hard to deem it heathen-ill
To worship such as thee.

For love might yet with bended knee
Urge its Promethean prayer
And worship in its extacy
The soul thought kindles there ;

Beauty's the type of heaven above
Where sinless praise is given,
Nor is it vain for earth to love
Aught that resembles heaven.

MYSTERY.

THERE is a vague oblivion, dark and vast
As is the future, fruitless as the past
To fathom and unravel to the end,
Of great adventure's darings. Books are penned
Mere guesses into truth, and at the last
Mere guesses only, going where they came
To that exhaustless blank that swallows all
With shadows and with darkness overcast.
There mystery lives indefinite and grand
Wed to a million fames: Perouse and all
His gallant navigators left the land
For earth's remotest depths, and where they fell
Discovery's courage ne'er can understand,
Nor rumour's thousand trumpets ever tell.

The CALM.

BENEATH my feet the very dust
Up with the whirlwind's summons flies
To tell the doubting and the just
That even dust shall reach the skies ;
Beside my path the flowers and grass
In trembling joy their praises pay,
Yet unobserving man goes by
Nor gleans a lesson in his way.

Though Nature breathes in quiet moods
And woos the heart in gentle ways,
A sterner power with time intrudes,
Shall waken all to fear and praise,
When death shall rise on every eye
And blend his voice with every call,
When all but Nature's debt shall die
And man the debtor pay for all.

That day shall come, in mighty storms
Each year its coming typifies ;
For what are thunder's dread alarms
To that shall bid the dead to rise ?

The wind, the water, fire and all
  As actors in that dreadful play
Make ready in their parts to fall,
  Rehearsing portions every day.

Yet man, ordained in every scene
  To act the first and chiefest part,
Neglects to feel the part he's in
  Nor gets a single page by heart,
Although the stage be worlds destroyed,
  The curtains, torn unpillared skies,
The actor, man by God employed
  To do his part of smiles or sighs,
Life everlastingly enjoyed
  Or pain's unceasing sacrifice.
And I by idle things employed
  Dread what the finale typifies.

AUTUMN MORNING.

THE storm is heaving up the sky,
The south is dark and dreary
That smiled so bright—as once did I ;
But now I'm sad and weary,
Heart-sick of what the world contains,
Its pleasing and its smiling.
Its pay's not half its cost in pains,
For pleasure grows beguiling.

The old wood heaves a massy wave
Like rivers overflowing,
And now the wind begins to rave
And loud the storm is growing :
So heaved the pleasures of the past
In life's bright crowded morning,
But O, I long for peace at last
And trouble gives me warning.

Heart-sick of every joy and care
That darken and enlighten
I sink down in my elbow chair—
O when will memory brighten ?

The storm has rattled down the wind,
  The sun again is dawning,
O God, give me the joy to find
  A calm in autumn's morning.

PRAYER.

THOU power from whom all pleasure springs
From thraldom set the feeble free,
Aid good intents on angels' wings
And make each purpose worthy Thee:

That whatsoe'er I do or think
My helpmate to life's good may be,
That, like the body's meat and drink
May keep the soul in health for Thee,

True temperance: that in Thine eyes
I still may live Thy daily guest,
And when from table I arise
Be found in Thy eternal rest.

I seek it in no public mood
Of show, as many do their dress,
I seek it with a heart subdued
To almost utter hopelessness.

Nor will it weaken Thy esteem
Or lessen favours meant for me;
Hypocrisy can never seem
In silence only heard by Thee.

WRITTEN in PRISON.

I envy e'en the fly its gleams of joy
In the green woods; from being but a boy
Among the vulgar and the lowly bred,
I envied e'en the hare her grassy bed.
Inured to strife and hardships from a child,
I traced with lonely step the desert wild;
Sighed o'er bird pleasures, but no nest destroyed;
With pleasure felt the singing they enjoyed;
Saw Nature smile on all and shed no tears,
A slave through ages, though a child in years;
The mockery and scorn of those more old,
An Aesop in the world's extended fold.
The fly I envy settling in the sun
On the green leaf, and wish my rest was won.

COME HITHER.

COME hither, ye who thirst,
Where still the brook flows on;
Its waters are not curst,
Clear from its rock of stone
It bubbles and it boils,
An everlasting rill,
Then eddies and recoils
And wimples clearer still.
Art troubled? then come hither,
And taste of Peace for ever.

Art weary? here's the place
For weariness to rest,
These flowers are herbs of grace
To cure the aching breast;
Soft beds these mossy banks
Where dewdrops only weep,
Where Nature 'turns God thanks
And sings herself to sleep.
Art troubled with strife? come hither,
Here's peace and summer weather.

Come hither for pleasure who list—
Here are oak boughs for a shade;

These leaves they will hide from the mist
Ere the Sun his broad disk has displayed.
Here is peace if thy bosom be troubled,
Here is rest—if thou'rt weary, sit down—
Here pleasure you'll find it is doubled,
For content is life's only crown.
Disciples of sorrow, come hither,
For no blasts my joys can wither.

Art sick of the naughty world ?
There's many been sick before thee ;
Then leave these young shoots with their tendrils
curl'd
For the oaks that are mossy and hoary.
Art weary with beating the flood ?
Here's a mossy bank—come and sit down :
'Twas Nature that planted this wood,
Unknown to the sins of the town
Full of pride and contention—come hither,
We'll talk of our troubles together.

The world is all lost in commotion,
The blind lead the blind into strife ;
Come hither, thou wreck of life's ocean,
Let solitude warm thee to life.
Be the pilgrim of love and the joy of its sorrow,
Be anything but the world's man :

The dark of to-day brings the sun of to-morrow,
Be proud that your joy here began.
Poor shipwreck of life, journey hither
And we'll talk of life's troubles together.

I LOST the LOVE of HEAVEN.

I lost the love of Heaven above,
I spurned the lust of Earth below,
I felt the sweets of fancied love
And Hell itself my only foe.

I lost Earth's joys, but felt the glow
Of Heaven's flame abound in me
Till loveliness and I did grow
The bard of Immortality.

I loved, but woman fell away ;
I hid me from her faded flame.
I snatched the sun's eternal ray
And wrote till Earth was but a name.

In every language upon earth,
On every shore, o'er every sea
I gave my name immortal birth
And kept my spirit with the free.

COMMENTARY.

COMMENTARY.

LANGLEY BUSH.

The shepherd's sacred shade, subject of a homely tribute in the "Village Minstrel," 1821, and famous for fairies, ghosts and gipsies.

THE EARLY DAISY.

From a first draught; its technical unfinality does not much disturb the brightness and spontaneous joy which called it into being.

COUNTRY SWEETHEARTS.

Within their various sections, the poems are printed in chronological order. This belongs probably to the earlier period of Clare's work—1818 or 1819.

A FIRESIDE SKETCH.

Streak, stretch out.
Hurkle, crouch.

WINTER.

Slurs, slides.
Cawdemawdies, gulls.

Harvest Rhyme.

Drowk, droop.
Slop, smock-frock.

The Stone.

This piece, the three that follow, *Autumn Birds*, and *Marten* belong to a singular group of brief poems which Clare was writing shortly before his first confinement in an asylum. They number some hundreds, are written on all sorts and sizes of paper, and were evidently set down at top speed, though they contain no alterations. They touch an apparently endless series of moments, characters, and idiosyncrasies of the life of a village, and the vividity of the observation and ancient hardness and directness of the expression give them an unmistakable individuality, which gains greatly when they are read as a whole. Clare in a letter thus refers to them: "When I was well and a thought struck me I wrote it down on a scrap of paper, and when I wished to correct them I stitched the scraps together; and found the beginning of even a sonnet at one end of the book and the end at the other. And I was soon so ill that I could do nothing with them, though I have been most anxious to do so, because I feel they are among the best I have written."

Pleasant Sounds.

Cat-ice; in another poem, he writes, "The cat-ice chatters where the schoolboy passed"—it is the ice of shallow puddles.

EVENING.

There are some uncertainties in the text, at present only found in a transcript. The remark applies to *The Camp*, *Song*, *Flowers*, *The Crow*, *Written in Prison*, *Come Hither*, *I Lost the Love of Heaven*, *Mary*, *To Harriett*, *Love*, *Pleasant Sounds*, and *O wert thou in the storm*. These pieces were written in the Northampton period.

BIRDS' LAMENT.

Possibly an adaptation by Clare of some folk-rhyme, but I have not traced such an origin.

AUTUMN BIRDS.

Starnels, starlings. This is one of the many curious pictures, like modern hieroglyphics, which Clare etches in his solitary mental "decline."

THE HEART THAT'S SMIT.

Clare projected a volume of poems in the Elizabethan manner, about 1825, when his favourite poets appear to have been Browne of Tavistock, Robert Southwell, Crashaw, Herrick and Suckling. Discouraged by Taylor, he produced a number of these practical adorations at old altars. *The Heart That's Smit* is one of them. The best known, *The Vanities of Life*, was reprinted in 1920.

A LIVING PICTURE.

Also titled, *Patty in 1818*.

STILL UNCHANGEABLE.

The title is now supplied. The verses, familiarly written, without any designs on Parnassus top, have a pathetic cadence which sighs them into the spirit.

UPB

O Wert Thou in the Storm.

While, in the closing stanza, is probably Northamptonshire for *till*.

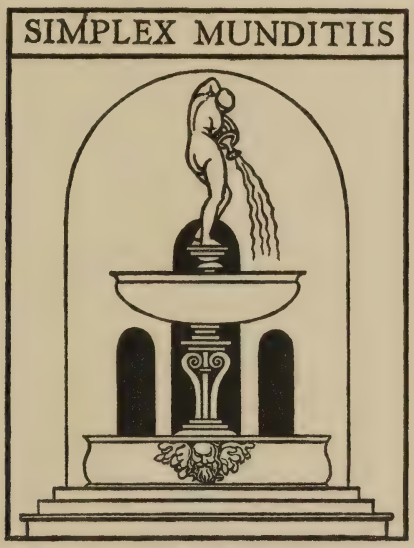
Written in Prison.

At Northampton Asylum.

I Lost the Love of Heaven.

An autobiography, and symbolical utterance of the lives and after-fames of all artists.

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